

A stack of books is shown on the right side of the image, partially obscured by a teal gradient overlay that covers the entire page. The books are stacked horizontally, with their spines visible. The teal color is a medium blue-green, fading from the left edge towards the right.

BALLOT**PEDIA**

K-12 EDUCATION

**CONTENT STANDARDS AND CURRICULUM
AUTHORITY IN THE STATES**

White Paper
October 2023

K-12 Education: Content standards and curriculum authority in the states

Summary

This white paper guides you through an introduction to K-12 education content standards and curriculum authority.

By the end of this white paper, you will have an understanding of the following K-12 education concepts:

- What content standards are
- How content standards are developed and implemented
- How content standards differ from state to state
- What curriculum authority is
- How curriculum authority is developed and implemented
- How curriculum authority differs from state to state

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K-12 Education: Content Standards in the states

What are content standards?

The term content standards refers to educational learning and achievement goals that state education officials either require or recommend that local schools satisfy in K-12 instruction.

Content standards are educational learning and achievement goals that state education officials either require or recommend that local schools satisfy in K-12 instruction. They are not curricula but rather aim to guide the development of what state officials view as a robust K-12 curriculum.

Understanding content standards

Content standards are not curricula but rather aim to guide the development of what state officials view as a robust K-12 curriculum.

K-12 education content standards may be required or recommended in public instruction. Some states require local schools to align curriculum with content standards by establishing content standards as a minimum course of study. Such states may also require local schools or districts to adopt content standards as part of their curriculum, or they may require students to demonstrate mastery of content standards through state assessments. Other states recommend that local schools or districts follow state content standards.

Implementation of content standards

The development of K-12 education content standards in public schools varies across the 50 states. State boards of education, state education agency leaders, and local school districts, for example, may play a role in the development and approval of content standards.

State or local entities require or recommend that schools follow content standards through state statutes or regulations.



Click the **LEARN MORE button for more information on K-12 education content standards in the states:**

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Implementation of content standards in the states

The development of K-12 education content standards in public schools varies across the 50 states. There are a variety of different entities responsible for establishing content standards, including state boards of education, state departments of education, and state education agency leaders.

Differences in content standards in the states

Some states **require** local schools to align curriculum with content standards by establishing content standards as a minimum course of study. Such states may also require local schools or districts to adopt content standards as part of their curriculum, or they may require students to demonstrate mastery of content standards through state assessments.

Other states **recommend** that local schools or districts follow state content standards.

The following 39 states require local schools to follow content standards

Alabama	Nevada
Alaska	New Hampshire
Arizona	New Jersey
Colorado	New Mexico
Delaware	New York
Florida	North Carolina
Georgia	North Dakota
Hawaii	Oregon
Idaho	Pennsylvania
Illinois	Rhode Island
Indiana	South Carolina
Iowa	South Dakota
Kansas	Tennessee
Kentucky	Texas
Maine	Utah
Maryland	Vermont
Massachusetts	Virginia
Minnesota	West Virginia
Mississippi	Wyoming
Missouri	

The following 11 states recommend local schools align curriculum with content standards

Arkansas	Nebraska
California	Ohio
Connecticut	Oklahoma
Louisiana	Washington
Michigan	Wisconsin
Montana	



**State boards of education
are responsible for
establishing content
standards in 36 states.**

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K-12 Education: Curriculum authority in the states

What is curriculum authority?

The term curriculum authority refers to who is responsible for setting K-12 curriculum for classroom instruction in public schools.

This White Paper guides you through an introduction to curriculum authority: what it is, how it is developed and implemented, and how it differs from state to state.

Understanding curriculum authority

State or local education officials develop K-12 curriculum for classroom instruction that generally includes lessons and materials used in a particular course of study.

K-12 curriculum may reflect or incorporate state content standards—educational learning and achievement goals that state education officials either require or recommend that local schools satisfy in K-12 instruction.

Implementation of curriculum

K-12 curriculum development in public schools varies across the 50 states. State-level entities (such as state boards of education and state education agency leaders) or local entities (such as school districts and local schools) may play a role in the development and approval of K-12 curriculum.

If a state-level entity is tasked with developing a K-12 curriculum, state statutes or regulations may either require or recommend that local schools or districts use the state-developed curriculum in the classroom. Other states allow local schools or districts to develop their own K-12 curriculum.



Click the **LEARN MORE** button for more information on K-12 curriculum authority, requirements, and statutes:

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Curriculum development in the states

The development of K-12 education content standards in public schools varies across the 50 states. There are a variety of different entities responsible for establishing content standards, including state boards of education, state departments of education, and state education agency leaders.

State or local education officials develop a K-12 curriculum for classroom instruction that generally includes lessons and materials used in a particular course of study. Depending on the state, the K-12 curriculum may reflect or incorporate state content standards—educational learning and achievement goals that state education officials either require or recommend that local schools satisfy in K-12 instruction.

Differences in curriculum authority in the states

K-12 curriculum can be developed by state-level entities or local entities.

- **46** states have local entities (such as school districts and local schools) develop curriculum.
- The following **two** states have state-level entities or local entities (such as state boards of education and state education agency leaders) develop curriculum:
 - North Carolina
 - Rhode Island
- The following **two** states have both state-level entities and local entities develop curriculum:
 - South Carolina
 - Texas

State-level entities tasked with developing a K-12 curriculum can **recommend** or **require** that local schools or districts use the state-developed curriculum in the classroom.

- North Carolina **requires** local schools or districts to use a state-developed curriculum in the classroom.
- The following **23** states recommend local schools or districts to follow a state-developed curriculum in the classroom, however, local entities have the final authority to develop lessons and materials to be used. The following states follow this model:

- | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|----------------|
| • California | • Maryland | • New Jersey |
| • Colorado | • Massachusetts | • New York |
| • Connecticut | • Michigan | • North Dakota |
| • Delaware | • Missouri | • Ohio |
| • Idaho | • Montana | • Oregon |
| • Illinois | • Nebraska | • Tennessee |
| • Indiana | • Nevada | • Utah |
| • Kentucky | • New Hampshire | |

Differences in curriculum authority in the states (continued)

- The following states grant authority to state and/or local entities for curriculum development under different models:
 - **Iowa** grants authority to local entities to develop curriculum but maintains some state-level core curriculum requirements that must be met
 - **Louisiana** grants authority to local entities to develop curriculum but requires approval of local curriculum by the state board of education
 - **Rhode Island** develops curriculum at the state level and maintains some requirements and some recommendations for local districts to follow
 - **South Carolina** and **Texas** develop some state board of education curriculum requirements and grant some local discretion to schools and districts for curriculum development
- **Twenty-one** states allow local schools or districts to develop K-12 curriculum for classroom instruction without recommendations from the state.



Click the 'Learn More' button to dive deeper into K-12 curriculum authority requirements and statutes:

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Continued reading:

Thank you for reading our White Paper on K-12 Education Content Standards and Curriculum Authority in the States.

To learn more on this topic, please visit our website for more information.

- [Responses to trends in curriculum development](#)
- [Responses to trends in curriculum development](#)
- [K-12 education content standards in the states](#)
- [K-12 areas of instruction required by statute in the states](#)



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